

61-7195/4

*E.S. - file*

September 26, 1961

*Handwritten signature/initials*

The Honorable Livingston T. Merchant  
United States Embassy  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Dear Livie:

I was very much interested in your letter of September 5th. It arrived while I was abroad, and my people have suggested an answer with which I am not fully in accord, and I want to give more thought to it before I send a more detailed reply.

I have always been interested in the so-called overload theory. There is a book written on this subject as I recall, by a man named "Bavelas." I am trying to lay my hands on this book to send to you in case you have not seen it.

I appreciate more than I can tell you your thought in writing the letter, as it has again made us think hard on a most interesting and somewhat complex problem.

Sincerely,

Allen W. Dulles  
Director

AWD:at

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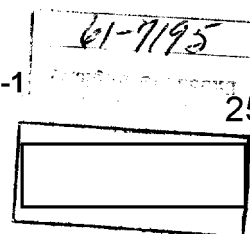
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EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE



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THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



United States Embassy,  
Ottawa, Ontario.  
September 5, 1961.

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Dear Allen:

I have been reading with great interest the collection of first-class essays on arms control edited by Louis Henkin and published by the American Assembly of Columbia University a few weeks ago. The military asset which the Soviets possess in the form of their closed society and internal security is referred to in several places. It reminded me that I have always been puzzled as to how one could equate a concession in weapons or numbers on our part to compensate the Soviets for the degradation of this asset through inspection if serious disarmament negotiations ever eventuated.

This led me to a further thought, which I assume is not original, but which I think should be fully explored and exploited to an extent beyond anything to my knowledge now being done. The thought rests on the simple theory that you can kill a cat by choking it to death with cream as well as by starving it. Surely the Soviet intelligence collection and estimating apparatus operates with a wealth of material on the United States military establishment and intentions by reason of our open society, free press and national lack of discipline. Would it not be in our interest calculatedly to increase greatly the volume of this raw material through a long-term intensive campaign of plants? Maybe the present flow of information made unintentionally available for the Soviets is already sufficient to keep their computers red hot and seriously overload and overwork the members of the Soviet board of national estimates or

whatever the top

The Honorable  
Allen W. Dulles,  
Director,  
Central Intelligence Agency,  
Washington, D.C.

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whatever the top committee may be called. Nevertheless, there might be things we could do to make a virtue of our necessity and make their operation as difficult as ours is but for reasons in reverse.

Don't hesitate to drop this in a wastepaper basket if—as I suspect—that is all it deserves.

All the best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Livie", written in dark ink.

Livingston T. Merchant

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